

## **House NDAA Provision on U.S.–Somaliland Partnership Will Advance Security and Prosperity in the Strategic Horn of Africa**

A bipartisan group of Members of Congress have acknowledged the importance of U.S. engagement with the Republic of Somaliland. **To ensure that the United States’ and Somaliland’s shared diplomatic, security and economic interests in the Horn of Africa are advanced, the Government of Somaliland encourages support for language advancing this partnership in the final conference version of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2023.**

Somaliland is a secure and stable democracy strategically located along the Gulf of Aden on the northern coast of the Horn of Africa. It has a long history of one-person one-vote elections that have been deemed free and fair by international observers. Somaliland has also built resilient democratic institutions – with the support of U.S. NGOs – since reclaiming its sovereign status in 1991. In recent years, the government and its partners modernized the strategic Port of Berbera, which was visited by the U.S. Africa Command leadership and a survey team earlier this year. Most recently, Somaliland has partnered with Taiwan despite threats by the People’s Republic of China and its aggressive presence in the region.

In recognition of these developments and the potential that engagement with Somaliland presents for U.S. interests in the region, a provision calling for a stronger security partnership was [included](#) in the House-approved National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2023, as well as in the [report](#) accompanying that legislation. These actions built on the [Somaliland Partnership Act](#) (S. 3861), which was introduced in March by Senate Foreign Relations Committee Ranking Member Jim Risch, along with Senators Chris Van Hollen and Mike Rounds, Chairman and Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Africa and Global Health Policy. Their legislation would require the Secretary of State to report annually on U.S. diplomatic engagement with and development assistance to Somaliland, and direct the Departments of State and Defense to study the feasibility of establishing a security partnership between the U.S. and Somaliland. S. 3861 was approved by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in June of this year.

Somaliland has taken a pragmatic path in engaging with the United States, with the understanding that diplomatic recognition is not a near-term likelihood. The government has prioritized opportunities to increase communication and coordination with the U.S. on a range of shared interests and did not object to language proposed in these bills clarifying that deeper engagement does not constitute recognition at this time.

The pending NDAA provision reflects a growing bipartisan consensus that the U.S. should strengthen its partnership with Somaliland to advance security and prosperity in the Horn of Africa. This consensus is reflected in statements by a wide range of policy makers and experts, which are excerpted below.

### **Somaliland is a Stable Partner in a Strategic Location**

*“The continued instability in the Horn of Africa and heightened global competition for resources and influence make it all the more important that we work with like-minded partners in the region, like Somaliland, committed to peace, democracy, and prosperity.”*

- [Sen. James Risch](#) (R-ID), Ranking Member, Senate Foreign Relations Committee (2/1/22)

*"For decades, Somaliland has proven itself to be an area with a stable, thriving democracy amidst a sea of conflict. That's why increasing opportunities for U.S. engagement with Somaliland makes sense. Our bill will help ensure the United States explores the greater possibilities of this mutually-beneficial relationship."*

- [Sen. Chris Van Hollen](#) (D-MD), Chairman, Senate Subcommittee on Africa and Global Health Policy (3/17/22)

*"Our meeting with President Bihi of Somaliland this morning allowed us to discuss ways to deepen engagement, promote cooperation and further support their remarkable progress in democracy, governance and security."*

- [Rep. Gregory Meeks](#) (D-NY), Chairman, House Foreign Affairs Committee (3/17/22)

*"Too much is at stake in the geo-strategic Horn of Africa to shut the door on deepening ties with #Somaliland. I was proud to lead a bipartisan letter to @SecBlinken to do more with Hargeisa, including diplomatic, economic and security engagements."*

- [Rep. Michael McCaul](#) (R-TX), Ranking Member, House Foreign Affairs Committee (3/15/22)

*"I want to recognize that amid the forces creating division and discord in the Horn... there is one oasis of stability and that is Somaliland, which is a de facto, independent area from Somalia."*

- [Rep. Chris Smith \(R-NJ\)](#), Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health and Global Human Rights (9/28/21)

*"Somaliland stands as a rebuke to those who claim that authoritarianism is simply the required price of stability in the region... Its successes should also prompt policymakers abroad, currently fixated on the Horn of Africa's multiple crises, to rethink what is possible in the region."*

- [Amb. Michelle Gavin](#), Senior Fellow for Africa Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations (6/8/21)

### **Somaliland Stands with Taiwan**

*"Somaliland showed backbone."*

- [Allen Chenhwa Lou](#), Taiwanese Representative to Somaliland, *"Somaliland, an unrecognized state, is winning friends abroad,"* **The Economist** (5/8/21)

*"An American-backed independent Somaliland would show other nations that there is an alternative to China's Belt-and-Road initiative in East Africa. This step could be key as China has*



*marked the area for great power competition by establishing its first overseas military base in neighboring Djibouti."*

- [Robert O'Brien](#), former U.S. National Security Advisor (8/13/21)

*"[A]lmost alone in Africa, [Somaliland has] been immune to Beijing's overtures and threats. In fact, Somaliland has established ties with our Taiwanese friends – another unrecognized democracy that the United States should support."*

- [Dr. Kevin Roberts](#), President of Heritage Foundation (3/13/22)

*"What Somaliland doesn't have is international recognition. Much like Taiwan – with whom they do have relations (another factor in their favor) – Somaliland is a victim of geopolitical 'realities.'"*

- [Tibor Nagy](#), former Assistant Secretary of State for Africa (9/3/22)

*"Somaliland swapped diplomats with Taiwan in 2020, a slap at Beijing, which considers the island part of China, and an overture to China hawks in the U.S."*

- [The Wall Street Journal](#) (2/1/22)

### **Somaliland is a Resilient Democracy**

*"When I really started taking a look at Somaliland, with colleagues in the Bush administration, what was apparent was that they were moving towards greater democracy and security. You had a constitutional referendum that was voted on in 2001, favoring restoring Somaliland's independence, and in 2003, you had the first elected president of Somaliland. You had these democratic elections, you had greater security. In contrast, in Somalia, you had a transitional federal government that could not get itself together as it continued to struggle with continued conflict and clan rivalry. So, the contrast between Somaliland and Somalia, and the desire for the international community, including the United States, to support Somaliland was growing."*

- [Jendayi Frazer](#), former Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs (6/14/22)

*"Hargeisa has made important progress to advance democracy and effective governance and the Administration should seek to consolidate and reward this, particularly amidst further democratic backsliding elsewhere in the region."*

- [Letter](#) signed by Reps. **Michael McCaul** (R-TX), **Chris Smith** (R-NJ), **Brian Fitzpatrick** (R-PA), **Tom Malinowski** (D-NJ), **Peter Meijer** (R-MI), **Guy Reschenthaler** (R-PA), **Kay Granger** (R-TX), **Young Kim** (R-CA) and **Steve Chabot** (R-OH) (3/14/22)

*"Somaliland's elites have historically found ways to build consensus about how to manage elections mainly because they are united by the overriding goal of preserving Somaliland's reputation for peace and stability."*

- “Building on Somaliland’s Successful Elections,” [The International Crisis Group](#) (8/12/21)

*“A strong relationship with an independent Somaliland [...] would demonstrate the benefits Washington confers on those who embrace representative government and would allow the U.S. to better support the territory’s tenacious, but still-consolidating, democracy. An independent Somaliland would be a stable partner.”*

- [Joshua Meservey](#), Senior Policy Analyst, Africa and the Middle East, The Heritage Foundation (10/19/21)

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